

1:Opler E-5 (1931-1937)1941

(ca. 1870) NT8 Eastern Apache NT8
Chiricahua

CHILDHOOD

When the baby is from a week to a few months old, his mother or his maternal grandmother pierces his ears. To do this she applies something hot to the ear and then punctures it with a strong thorn or a sharp bone. The child learns "to hear things sooner" and obeys more quickly if this is done promptly. "When the ears are not pierced, the child cannot be controlled; he will be wild and go to the bad. It is believed that children grow faster too if this is done." Pendants of white beads or turquoise are strung from the ears of very young children, and this mode of ornamentation continues throughout life. 13 852
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[828]

Sexual intercourse between a man and his wife is not resumed until the child has been weaned. During this period of almost three years the couple is expected to remain continent. Actually, some men contrive to "sneak around" and "find easy women" with whom to have relations. But social pressure operates to enforce this rule of continence strictly in the majority of cases. A man so importunate as to demand connection with his wife too soon is subject to sharp criticism and is said to have acted "against" his growing child. "There is a man whose child is not walking yet and his wife is pregnant. The Indians think he is no good. We are ashamed to have a second child on the way before a first is weaned." 834
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Because the mother's milk supply has been stopped or altered by her new pregnancy, the nursing infant is "starved" and upset and is likely to become a weakling. In such an emergency another minor rite is arranged: 853
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[856]

There's a hair-cutting ceremony that I'm going to tell you about. Let us say a child is only a year old and the mother is pregnant again while that child is still nursing. Then the little child that is only a year old is sick; it has stomach trouble. Something must be done for that child.

When this happens, the mother usually takes the child to an old woman or someone who knows what to do. This old woman cuts the child's hair and puts red paint over the child's body. Then she gives it some kind of medicine. [755]

Polygyny, though it is not widely practiced, exists, and a man with more than one wife "is in a good position, for when one of his wives is pregnant or has a nursing child, he can go to the other." 595
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